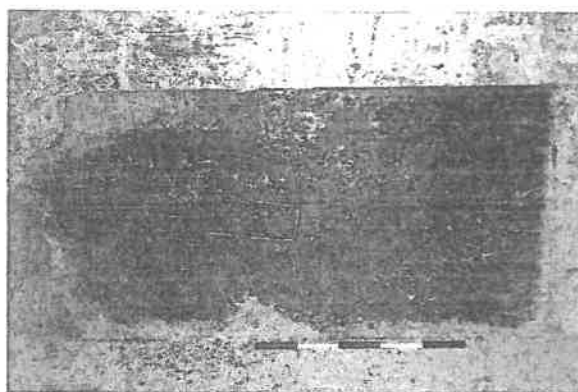


# Abbeyfield House, Llandeilo, Stone with Graffiti from the period of the Rebecca Riots: - Condition Report and Recommendations for future display.

B.M.A. Wright Conservation Officer, Carmarthen Museum Service. 2006.

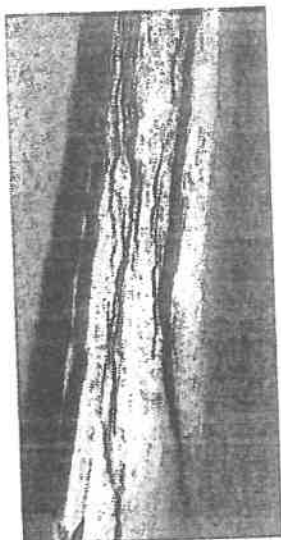
The stone was inspected on the 20th June 2006 at the request of the custodian Mr. Colin Wright and Gwilym Hughes of Cambria Archaeology who had concerns about damage it has already sustained and how best to preserve it in the long term. There is also a desire to bring it into the public domain as part of a display either in the foyer of Abbeyfield House or elsewhere.

The stone is a slab of slate approximately 600 mm high x 1000 mm long x 6 mm thick with graffiti scratched into one face. (For clarity and ease of future reference the term 'the top edge of the stone' will relate to the edge which is uppermost when the graffiti is the correct way up, likewise all references to left and right – in reality at the time of inspection the stone is upside down with the top edge of the stone being in contact with the ground).



The stone as it is in the cellar of Abbeyfield house  
©Gwilym Hughes Cambria Archaeology.

The stone was at one time embedded in the wall of the cellar but during the recent renovations to the property it was removed and is now leaning against the wall of the cellar. Remnants of cement render on the left edge indicate where it was embedded in the wall. This edge is intact and has suffered no damage as is obvious from the clean and sharp edges, but the right edge has substantial losses and is laminated severely along the bedding plane of the stone. Part of the front surface in the area of the lamination has been lost entirely, with no indication of the extent of the right edge of the stone, however the back layer of stone ends quite squarely at the upper right corner and it is assumed that this correlates to the original right edge. The lower right edge of the back layer has also been lost. There is also an area of loss from the front and top edge about a third of the way along from the left edge.



The large crack or lamination runs along from the right edge for approximately a third of the length of the stone and is a substantial threat to the stability of the whole stone. From the size of the crack I would think that its' cause is physical rather than environmental and would guess that it occurred during its removal from the wall, also because of the physical construction of slate it does have a tendency to sheer in this way as a result of impact. The missing parts from the surface layer and the backing layer are both probably as a result of the weakening of the whole due to this crack and or impact. Further losses are likely if nothing is done to stabilise the object.



Detail from picture in the book 'And They Blessed Rebecca' by Pat Molloy.



Detail of area of loss

Comparison to detail photographs of some of the inscriptions in the book 'And They Blessed Rebecca' by Pat Molloy indicate that very little of the inscription itself has been damaged, just the line around the 'OLD BOSS EYE DON'T CARE A ...' which has been lost on the right edge.

A rudimentary search of the floor of the cellar immediately adjacent to the stone did not reveal any of the missing parts and so it must be assumed that they are totally lost.

### Removal and conservation

Any pressure put on the laminated end of the stone could result in the piece breaking off in entirety, or worse it breaking into fragments. Such pressure could easily result from an attempt to move the stone. Left in situ there is probably little need for concern in the short term, however if it is to be made available for the public to view then it will have to be moved. Before any attempt is made to move it either within the cellar and especially to move it out of the cellar some consolidation of the crack will need to be undertaken and a suitable cradle / support constructed so that it can be manoeuvred without putting undue stresses and strains on the stone itself. Consolidation would require the crack being filled with a suitable resin and filler, for example paraloid B72 and glass micro balloons, which can be easily removed at a

later date if so required. This would reduce the risk of the face of the stone sheering off completely during removal.

A cradle or box constructed around the stone so that it fully supported it whilst also protecting it from localised pressure of handling would need to be

- Strong to support the weight of the stone
- Inflexible to avoid twist stresses on the stone,
- Light weight to keep the final weight as light as possible,
- Easy to hold with the ability to change grip easily
- Well padded on the inside so that the stone could not move during transit.

The stone will need cleaning prior to display and this can be done by various methods, only test cleaning of small areas would determine the best method to use.

It is recommended that this work be carried out by a recognised specialist in stone conservation and removal.

### **Display requirements.**

For viewing the stone's inscribed surface it would be best if the stone were placed vertical, at a very slight angle to vertical, or horizontal.

The stone has its greatest strength and least internal stresses when vertical on one edge and its centre of gravity runs through its point of contact with the ground (or display case) making it unlikely to shift. A very strong shelf and brackets to prevent the stone tipping forwards would suffice for this.

If leaned at an angle there are stresses created within it and on the bottom edge, the centre of gravity is not running through the point of contact and it would be likely to slip; it would also be likely to sustain damage along the bottom edge where the stone is in contact with the ground; the smaller the angle from the vertical the better.

However if fully supported by an angled base this could be suitable. Horizontally although the stone is stable and has low internal stresses moving it into the horizontal could put a lot of pressure on it and risk damage to the already weakened areas. Also displayed horizontally it would need a much greater display area than if vertical and this is a key issue if it is to be displayed in Abbeyfield House.

The Slate is susceptible to damage due to extreme changes in both temperature and Relative Humidity (RH), a good quality case would act as a buffer from these fluctuations in the air, however if this were then lit with a bright spot light it could cause the internal environment to fluctuate more than external levels. A position in bright sunlight could have the same adverse effect. There are several types of low heat lighting available which could be used.

If people can touch the stone, there will be gradual wear of the areas frequently touched also these areas will absorb grease from the hands and as a result it will appear smooth and shiny, eventually the definition of the graffiti will be lost, also there is the risk of accidental damage such as scratching by jewellery and deliberate damage in the form of modern graffiti.

The stone ought to be enclosed in a wall mounted case either vertically or fully supported at a slight angle from vertical, in a well lit but not directly sunlit position; this will protect it from a poor environment and from people touching it, but give the best viewing position.

Note this report is for reference purposes only and is not intended for publication.